

Examination of School Start Times
Districtwide Site-Based Team

Meeting Minutes

1/29/20

Introduction/Welcome by Dr. McCommons, Deputy Superintendent

The purpose of the meeting is to educate the districtwide site-based team on the impact of starting high school later. Pushing back the high school start time will impact finances, athletics, transportation, etc., so the site-based team needs to make an informed recommendation to the administration and Fox Chapel Area Board of School Directors.

Background

The Start School Later discussion began in 2016 when several parents approached the School Board.

There have been two prior meetings of the districtwide site-based team: February 2019 (discussed positives and negatives, and requested more data) and April 2019 (heard from panel of health experts).

At an earlier meeting, the districtwide site-based team expressed the need for a single, concrete option to consider and fully understand the implications.

It was later decided that there will be a series of meetings of the districtwide site-based team on various topics: transportation, educational programming, athletics, and financial impact.

The purpose of the Jan. 29 meeting is to discuss the topic of transportation to examine the financial impact and other ramifications if later start times are implemented.

Presentation by Mr. Dan Breitzkreutz, Director of Ancillary Services

The Fox Chapel Area School District engaged three companies to potentially study the district's transportation data: Transfinder, School Bus Consultants, and EDULOG, and decided on Transfinder because the company already had the district's data. Thus, Transfinder could provide the same service at the most reasonable cost.

Mr. Breitzkreutz's presentation focused on comparing current bus arrival and departure times with proposed arrival and departure times, and what considerations must be made if the district moves forward with different school start times.

Option 4 was selected for Transfinder to study because it was a middle ground for FCASD and parents who support a later start time for high school students.

Four key considerations:

- 1) Maintain service levels (same stops in same places)
- 2) May have to make minor adjustments to AM schedules to accommodate bus unloading
- 3) Varied start times for elementary schools will remain in place
- 4) Moving times back will require a minimum of 12 full-size buses and 3 additional mini-buses

There are a number of unknown fiscal implications:

- Beattie transportation
- Central Catholic/Oakland Catholic students
- Special education vans
- Homeless/foster student transportation
- Private/parochial schools assigned to our 3-tier system
- There will be an estimated \$700K additional annual cost to taxpayers if high school starts later and Option 4 is adopted

Approximately 46 Hartwood students would be picked up before 7 a.m. if Option 4 is adopted (Jacoby Road, Little Deer Creek, Rural Ridge areas).

About 125 high school and elementary students will be at the stop/area around the same time in the Sharpsburg area if Option 4 is selected. Who would pay for crossing guards? The district and borough currently share costs.

O'Hara Elementary students in six areas would be home approximately one hour after school before high school students arrive home under Option 4.

Fairview Elementary students in six areas would be home approximately 30 minutes after school before high school students arrive home under Option 4.

Kerr Elementary students in approximately five areas would be home about 30 minutes after school before high school students arrive home under Option 4.

**Aaron Silverman/Todd O'Shell
ABC Transit Incorporated**

ABC Transit faces a number of potential implications, both positive and negative, if later start times are adopted.

General Transportation Implications

Mr. O'Shell discussed how the district's transportation contract will cost more because of the need to add staff, vehicles, etc.

ABC Transit will need to ramp up recruitment efforts in order to hire additional drivers. The ability to recruit drivers could be hurt by possible shorter work hours.

There will be more space needed to house buses.

Potential Benefits

- Road conditions may be improved with later start times as buses start later
- Later start times may be attractive to those who might not want to get up so early
- Possibly more flexibility with afternoon athletic transportation
- Less wear and tear on school vehicles

Potential Challenges

- Needing more drivers in midst of nationwide shortage of school bus drivers (ABC is already running short at FCASD)
- Potential loss of route flexibility for shared/integrated routes with private, parochial, and special needs schools
- Possible loss of drivers who have other jobs
- Some drivers may leave/retire, not wanting new routine

Question Clustering

Questions from site-based team were placed into one of four categories: General Transportation Implications, Potential Benefits, Challenges, Other

General Transportation Implications

- How ABC will adjust. What if it can't meet the needs or demands of change?
- Aides at bus stops with elementary and high school students
- Finances and how benefits will be measured
- Cost benefit analysis
- Where will money to fund this come from?
- Potential efficiency with private and parochial
- Pick up closer to homes
- Pick up at middle school
- How many O'Hara students will be picked up at 7 a.m.?

- How long will elementary students be on buses
- Activity and sports buses
- Covering athletic events/leave during school hours
- YMCA program
- K-12 on same buses. Is that appropriate?
- Can we combine on same bus for efficiency?

Potential Benefits

- Buses available for elementary runs and still take sports kids
- Fewer 2-hour delays
- Opportunity to improve walkability

Challenges

- Anxiety
- Truancy
- Morning activities at DMS
- Students waiting at bus stops in dark
- HS students with elementary students at same bus stop/on same bus
- ABC should talk with their employees to see if they want to do this
- Will drivers work less hours and make less money?
- Lack of drivers
- Attending Beattie
- Effect on athletics/athletes who might miss more class
- Extracurriculars
- Elementary students home alone/cost of child care

Other

- How will Beattie students be able to do after-school activities?
- Athletes missing class
- We need to consider those without kids in schools due to tax implications
- Are we supporting the change or investigating the change?
- Start later so no one needs to get on bus in dark
- Combine older kids with younger on the bus

Closing

Districtwide site-based team needs to be able to make a recommendation to the administration and School Board

Next Meeting

The next meeting is set for Feb. 27, 2020. There was a request to change the date due to Grade 5/DMS concert.

Questions

- How can we see which other districts have implemented a change to school start times? That is available on the web site.

Reminder

- Speaker set for 6:30 p.m. March 17, 2020: Wendy Troxel, "Why Schools Should Start Schools Later for Teens," in the high school large group instruction room